

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

What it stands for ; what it has done and is doing. How will these affect the Nursing World.

Conference Paper by Miss S. Round of Panwal.

In presenting this subject to you I hope I have not attempted too big a thing. To begin with we must go back to sometime before the War. As far back as 1908 at a big International Conference held in the Hague the subject of some big organization was discussed which would bring the nations together. It met again in 1910 and 1912. The main object of these assemblies and discussions was to have an International Tribune to help to settle arbitrary disputes. All those nations which were represented at these Conferences agreed except Germany. In 1916 while the Great War was in progress various people in England, America, and France again assembled and discussed the suggestions of a similar organization to that discussed at the Hague Conferences. There was to be a big difference in forming it. First a Permanent Secretariat, and the plans and objects were to be on a firmer and stronger basis. One of the principal parties in this decision was Lord Robert Cecil and representatives from America and France. Again in 1917-1918 these representatives met and Mr. Wilson of America was subsequently in favour. At the Peace Conference following the armistice which nearly all the world has just been remembering the government of the League was drawn up. This took place July 28th, 1918 and was much on the same lines as the Treaty of Versailles, when delegates from 23 countries put their signatures to the parchment. The original members of the Versailles Treaty notified this drawing up of plans to all the neutral nations and they were admitted to the League. The enemy nations were not admitted. The main order of the League consisted first a Permanent Secretariat, second an Assembly to meet annually. At these assemblies each member-state generally sends three delegates but they only have one vote. Formerly it consisted of a Grand Council with 10 members, but now increased to 15. Two permanent seats on the council were reserved for Russia and America. Russia under her present rule will certainly not be admitted. We are all hoping that America will come in soon. There will be an International High Court, and branches dealing with disarmament, labour organization, commercial matters. The Five Great Powers of the League are England, France, Italy, Japan and now Germany who has just been admitted. Spain has given two years notice to quit the League because she is not given a permanent seat. The Power of the League will be manifold as it will deal with disarmament, transport on land and sea and in the air; it will keep a record and up-to-date chart of the seas and sea-routes, air routes and all ways and means of helping those countries who are members of the League during a crisis. Next in importance will be

the humanitarian work of the League and those who have anything to do with the sick and wounded in the war must realize what that means. If there must be war let it be a clean one. Then comes the Medical part which I am leaving to the end so that I can bring it in more fully. Then we have the Commercial Branch and the labour organization. This too is of the utmost importance because it will enable all the nations so to speak to pool their knowledge and experience. The Commercial part will include to a certain extent control of postal and telegraph service, wireless, and all the problems relating to commerce and labour. By this means the smaller nations will gain the experience of the bigger powers. One of the most momentous crises in the League's history was the signing of the Locarno Pact in 1925. This Pact was ratified on September 14th, Germany was unanimously admitted on September 8th, 1926, when she became a permanent member of the Council. Sir Austen Chamberlain said it was his great joy to welcome Germany. It meant before she could be admitted she must have done or promised to do all that the League requires of her. It will not be easy to break these vows when one realizes that over 3,000 people of all lands were present when Dr. Stresemann took his seat on the Tribune and added his signature to this momentous document.

It is interesting to note according to the British Medical Journal, which was represented, that not all the delegates attending the assembly come from senates and embassies. Almost every University in Europe is represented at Geneva. Two professors from France; a professor of science from Brussels; two from Norway, one of whom is Dr. Nansen the Arctic Explorer; others included professors from Switzerland, Finland, Rumania, Poland, and the Irish Free State.

Before going into the medical part we will consider briefly what the league has already accomplished. It has secured from France protection on its Eastern and Western boundaries. It has taken the greater share in the repatriation of refugees, and when one remembers the millions this includes from all the nations which took part in the war, this is no mean task. It has helped to put Austria on a financial basis, and it has already helped to quell what might have been a troublesome affair between Serbia and Bulgaria. These are only the big things.

Now you will begin to think how does this affect the nursing world. First it means if there is to be no more war that the nursing services will be free to carry on their peace-time programme. The Red Cross societies have been enrolled by the League of Nations. By the 25th Article of the covenant of the League of Nations, all states adhering to this League have given explicit recognition to the great international power for human betterment which the Red Cross represents; for they are pledged by this instrument to encourage and promote the establishment and co-operation of duly authorized voluntary Red Cross organizations, having as purposes the improvement of health, the prevention of disease,

and the mitigation of suffering throughout the world. The League is in close touch with the cancer research work and the means of making the Gold Coast and equatorial Africa less of a whiteman's grave. The malaria and hookworm research work, all of which are being helped by the Rockefeller Foundation, comes under the League of Nations' plans. Just now there is a great discussion going on about the opium question in India. It was stated that the world's requirement for medical purposes was 350 tons a year, whereas the minimum total of the world's production was 3,500 tons a year. The surplus was accounted for its use by smoking in the Far East; for eating in India, and by illicit traffic. We in India know only too well what that means, the number of deaths it causes, besides poverty and ill-health. Accepting the League of Nations index figure as 12lbs. of opium per annum for 10,000 population to meet medical requirements, it appears that while the average for all India is stated to be 24lbs., in Assam, it is 104lbs., in parts of the Punjab over 100 lbs., in Bombay 86lbs., in Rangoon 218lbs., and in Calcutta 287lbs. Such variations in the distribution of consumption point to opium addiction in particular towns and districts and cannot be explained by its use as a domestic remedy in places where medical advice is not available.

In putting before you such statement surely one cannot but be impressed that the League of Nations if it carries out all the schemes it has in hand cannot fail in helping to bind the nations together and in lessening the suffering imposed by war on the innocent as well as the guilty and prove to the world its value. As nurses we shall all come under its influence through the many schemes it has in hand. What will it mean if cancer can be overcome, if malaria disappears from India and opium becomes more restricted and guarded. If by putting these things before the Conference I have helped to make known the League of Nations and though only so briefly given details of its work I shall feel honoured.

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